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SUBJECT: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UN TO COMBAT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN THE MONUC PEACEKEEPING OPERATION: DRC

REF: 09 STATE 130760; 09 KINSHASA 591

¶1. (SBU) Summary: An influential Congolese NGO, Voice of the Voiceless, acknowledged that improvements in MONUC's handling of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) cases have occurred in 2009, but more improvements are needed. MONUC's Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) report SEA allegations in 2009 were slightly lower than in 2008. The CDU maintains that the UN system and member state actions have resulted in slower justice. The CDU recommended a stronger judicial and investigative system and disciplinary authority for mission SRSs. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff recently met with Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, Executive Director of the NGO Voice of the Voiceless and his deputy Dolly Ibebo. Both believe that the local perception of the UN and MONUC has improved over time, but noted that many Congolese doubted whether guilty UN troops, who had been sent home, were really prosecuted in their countries. Chebeya was positive in noting the work that the CDU has done to improve the situation, but believes MONUC still has much to do.

¶3. (U) MONUC provided us with various documents to highlight the training and punitive measures it has undertaken in the past year. MONUC reported that the number of Category 1 (most serious) SEA allegations in 2009 decreased slightly to 37 from 38 in 2008. MONUC repatriated 33 contingent members in 2009 on disciplinary grounds. The CDU regularly makes visits to the field to conduct assessments. The MONUC SEA Focal Point network continues to assist the CDU and senior management in training. In summer 2009, the CDU conducted an anti-prostitution campaign sensitizing the local population on grassroots approaches to reducing the number of SEA allegations. With German government funds, the CDU also established rehabilitation centers for women engaged in prostitution as part of the mandated victim's assistance policy. Funding for this project was for one year and its future is uncertain, but MONUC hopes that member states will continue to fund this effort.

¶4. (SBU) Yewande Odia, head of the CDU, acknowledged to Poloff that, even though SEA allegations did not change significantly in 2009, the presence of three new field offices in the East has provided for greater reporting in those areas of potentially high SEA allegations. Odia is confident that the numbers will begin to decrease significantly over the next year with this expanded presence. Odia reiterated that the number of investigators in the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in the DRC had been reduced from 9 to 2, making it harder to initiate and complete investigations in a timely manner. In addition, Odia criticized both the UN 2009 reform system and member states for not providing

mission SRSGs sanctioning authority for certain conduct violations, thus allowing a sentiment that impunity exists within the UN ranks. According to Odia and the CDU team, the backlog of cases in New York is so great that individuals who have been found guilty of theft, battery, and even rape via the investigative process are still receiving paychecks and reporting for work months or years after the incidents. Odia believes that this lack of disciplinary authority undermines the work of the UN in stemming the tide of impunity in the GDRC.

15. (SBU) Summary: As the UN's largest PKO in an enormous country with poor infrastructure, it remains a challenge to monitor the conduct of MONUC's military and civilian components. MONUC, in our opinion, is doing all it possibly can to provide training, monitor conduct, and punish perpetrators. To end a sense of impunity, however, an effective judicial system to reduce the backlog of cases and SRSG disciplinary authority to impose sanctions should be explored. End summary.

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